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Determining How a Child's Moral Behavior is Related to the Style of Discipline He Is Exposed to  
and How it Will Reflect on His Temperament Later in Life.

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## Determining How a Child's Moral Behavior is Related to the Style of Discipline He Is Exposed to and How it Will Reflect on His Temperament Later in Life.

Parental involvement in a child's life is a critical factor for its success later in life. Several studies on parental involvement in preschool programs showed its benefits on children's cognitive and social development (Chang, Kim, & Park, 2009). In fact, preschoolers whose parents took part in a parent education program displayed notably higher intelligence, language ability, and social skills (Pfannenstiel & Seltzer, 1985). However, is the parental involvement in the kid's childhood the only guarantee that the child will have good moral behaviors later in life? Can the style of discipline a child is exposed to affect his temperament during his development? Several different methods of raising a kid could actually result in a different outcome in the child's moral behavior when he reaches adulthood. Those methods include power assertion, induction, and permissiveness. While each of those methods has advantages and disadvantages, how can we know how to properly use them to educate a child? Which one would be better to use or which one should be avoided? For the parents, it is always hard to find a good balance between those methods. Nevertheless, a good understanding of those terms and their outcomes can indubitably help one to find a better way to educate their child.

During his childhood, the kid will learn how to differentiate what is good from bad. However, if the parents do not demonstrate this ability, the child will be unable to make the difference between what is moral and immoral. When the parents want to teach a child to learn how to tell what is bad or wrong, they obviously have to show some kind of authority. One of the ways the parents exercise their authority over the child is by using a method called power assertion. Probably the most common method of child rearing, power assertion uses punishment as a way to enforce good behavior and moral standards. Those punishments vary considerably

among families. In general, the types of punishment depend on the parents' beliefs, their culture and experiences, and their own good sense. Those usually consist of physical punishments like spanking, the deprivation of the child's privileges, and verbal insults. However, power assertion does not mean it will have the same effect on all children (Bornstein, Collins, Hetherington, Maccoby, & Steinberg, 2000). How the child interprets spanking, for instance, depends on the context of the situation and also on the degree of aggressiveness in the spanking. The moderate use of spanking does not result in long-term detrimental outcomes for most children (Baumrind, Cowan, & Larzelere, 2002). But, when it is taken to the extreme, the child will carry those methods with him and it will most likely affect his behavior and moral standards later in life. Moreover, the child might be more inclined to transmit the methods he was exposed to the next generation. In other words, if the parents teach their kid in an aggressive manner, the child will probably use an aggressive teaching method if he has children in the future. Studies have also showed that normal attachment behavior in adulthood may be altered or even disrupted by traumatic experiences in childhood (Prather, 2007). Power assertion is really a method that one has to handle carefully because it can easily affect the child's behavior later in his life. However, another method is often used to teach good moral behavior to a child without having to use physical punishments or verbal insults.

A more successful approach of teaching kids to behave or differentiate what's good from bad is by using a method called induction. Instead of using a punitive form of discipline, parents will try to explain to the child why a behavior is wrong and should be changed by emphasizing on its effects on others (Shaffer, 2009). For instance, if the child purposely tackles his little brother just because it amuses him, the parents might tell him to stop and explain him that it might hurt his little brother if he continues. That way, the child whose parents emphasize the importance of

empathy will feel guilty if he hurts others. According to Eisenberg et al. (2002), “Empathy bonds with moral principles, provides the motivational force to act on those principles, and stimulates the development of internalized moral reasoning reflecting concern for others’ welfare.” (p.994). In other words, when the parents tell their child what he did wrong, the child will understand the consequences and have some kind of regrets for what he did and will therefore be able to internally reason or form good judgment from his actions. He will somehow understand what others feel when, for instance, he tackles his little brother. He will know that it can hurt him. If the child succeeds in internalizing standards of right and wrong, he will most likely be considerate of others when he reaches adulthood (Eisenberg et al., 2002). However, if he fails this part of his socialization process, he might be egoistic or indifferent of others later in life. Concerned of their child’s good behavior, parents using induction will always express sensitivity but will also have expectations from their child’s morality.

Another way parents educate their kid is by being permissive. Permissiveness is a method in which parents allow their kid to do everything they want. Unlike power assertion and induction, permissiveness is not as successful to the child’s development. Unfortunately, in the majority of those cases, the parents do not want to be involved or are unconcerned of their child’s development and socialization process. Most of the time, when the parents are uninvolved, it has a negative outcome in the child’s motivations. In fact, a study made on 140 students from a northern California public high school has showed that teenagers whose parents were permissive during their childhood had the tendency to be less “mastery oriented” (Hoang, 2007). In other words, those adolescents were less motivated to perform and learn in school and to fulfill their regular tasks. Although permissiveness is not always a successful method, parents can always use it as a way to reward the child from his good behavior or efforts at school. Just like power

assertion and induction, however, the use of permissiveness has to be moderate. Sometimes, rewarding your child with an ice cream, for instance, can also result in good behaviors and moral standards because the child will then associate ice cream with good behaviors. A good balance between power assertion, induction, and permissiveness is really the key to demonstrate to a child the good moral standards and behaviors.

Finally, one can conclude that not only the parents' involvement in the child's life is highly important but also that the style in which the discipline is imposed is crucial for his success later in life. Methods like power assertion, induction, and permissiveness can only help the child's development if the parents use them with moderation. At this stage of life, children learn skills and acquire tools that will help them to function and live in a society. Therefore, if the parents are not concerned about their child's well-being and moral standards, it will most likely affect the child's future and probably jeopardize his chances to reach self-actualization. Now that one understands the importance of socialization, hopefully he or she will be able to teach good moral standards to the child.

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